

The number of elements in a generalized partition semilattice

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Abstract

Let $\Pi_{n,k}$ be the partially ordered set whose elements are all nonempty intersections of the affine hyperplanes

$$H_{i,j,r} = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : x_i = x_j + r\}$$

for integers i, j, k, r such that $1 \leq i, j \leq n$ and $|r| \leq k$, ordered by reverse inclusion. First we show that for a fixed k , the exponential generating function $M_k(x)$ of the number of maximal elements in this poset is

$$M_k(x) = \frac{e^x - 1}{(1+k) - ke^x},$$

and then from this, it follows immediately, using species, that the number of elements in this poset which have a given dimension d is the coefficient of $t^d x^n / n!$ in $N_k(x, t) = e^{tM_k(x)}$.

After we do this, we use the fact that $M_{k+1}(x)$ can be expressed in terms of $M_k(x)$ for each k to show that this implies that there is a bijection between the set of maximal elements of $\Pi_{n,k+1}$ and a certain other set. © 1998 Published by Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved

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1. Introduction

Given an integer $n \geq 2$, a *hyperplane arrangement* is a finite collection of affine subspaces of \mathbb{R}^n of dimension $n - 1$. We define its *intersection poset* to be the partially ordered set of all nonempty intersections of hyperplanes in the arrangement, ordered

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by reverse inclusion. Consider the affine hyperplanes

$$H_{i,j,r} = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : x_i = x_j + r\}$$

for $i, j, r \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $1 \leq i, j \leq n$. For some nonnegative integer k , let $\mathcal{A}_{n,k}$ be the arrangement that consists of the $H_{i,j,r}$ for which $|r| \leq k$, and let $\Pi_{n,k}$ be the intersection poset of this arrangement. Also, let $\Pi_{1,k}$ be a one-element set for all k . In this paper, the main goal is to find an expression of the number of elements in $\Pi_{n,k}$.

There has been a lot of recent work on hyperplane arrangements. Athanasiadis, in his Ph.D. thesis [1], proved a lot of results on the algebraic combinatorics of hyperplane arrangements, including the characteristic polynomial of a variety of intersection posets. In another paper [2], he shows how some hyperplane arrangements can be realized as certain polytopes. Stanley [9] used a result of Zaslavsky [10, Theorems A and B] on the number of regions and the number of bounded regions to find results on arrangements that are certain subsets of $\mathcal{A}_{n,k}$ for a given k . He also mentions many other references on the subject. Kerr, as part of her Ph.D. thesis [6], discussed the homology of the poset formed by adding the empty set as the maximum element to $\Pi_{n,k}$. There has also been some work on hyperplane arrangements outside of combinatorics; see for example [7].

The *braid arrangement* is the hyperplane arrangement $\mathcal{A}_{n,0}$. Its intersection poset is isomorphic to Π_n , the well-known poset of partitions of $[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ (for a description of partitions, see [8, Example 3.1.1d]); for a given partition, if i and j are in the same block, then the corresponding element of $\Pi_{n,0}$ is contained in $H_{i,j,0}$. The arrangement $\mathcal{A}_{n,1}$ is called the *Catalan arrangement* (see [2, Section 1; 9, Section 2]), and the arrangements $\mathcal{A}_{n,k}$ are known as the *extended Catalan arrangements*.

For a poset P , let $\text{Max}(P)$ be the set of maximal elements of P , and for a set S , let $\#S$ denote its cardinality. Our main goal is to find the exponential generating function of $\#\Pi_{n,k}$, given k . For each k , $\Pi_{n,k}$ has a unique minimal element, the space \mathbb{R}^n . If $X \in \Pi_{n,k}$ is a one-dimensional affine subspace of \mathbb{R}^n , then for each $x \in X$, $x_1 = x_2 + r_2 = \dots = x_n + r_n$ for fixed r_2, r_3, \dots, r_n . Thus all one-dimensional affine subspaces are parallel to each other, so an element of $\Pi_{n,k}$ is maximal if and only if its dimension is 1. Therefore, for each n , $\Pi_{n,0}$ has one maximal element, and for $k > 0$, $\Pi_{n,k}$ has more than one maximal element, which means it is not a lattice by [8, p. 103], so we call it a *generalized partition semilattice*. In order to find the exponential generating function of $\#\Pi_{n,k}$, we first find it for $\#\text{Max}(\Pi_{n,k})$, which we denote $M_{n,k}$. In Section 2, we fix k and show that this exponential generating function is as stated in (1). Once we know this, we show in Section 3 that the exponential generating function for $\#\Pi_{n,k}$ follows immediately using species, and is stated in (2). We denote this number $B_k(n)$. We also do the same for the number of elements in $\Pi_{n,k}$ of a given dimension d , denoted $S_k(n, d)$.

After we have these results, there is a recurrence on $M_k(x)$ of order 1 in terms of k . In other words, $M_{k+1}(x)$ can be expressed in terms of $M_k(x)$, which is an immediate result of Theorem 1. In Section 4, we use this to show that the maximal elements of

$\Pi_{n,k+1}$ are in bijection with the elements of a certain other set, and we find a specific bijection.

There are more combinatorial results on this subject, including some identities that use the number of maximal elements, and some that generalize the Bell and Stirling numbers using $\Pi_{n,k}$. There has also been work done on the action of the symmetric group on the poset and the character of this action. These appear in [4] and may appear in future papers.

2. The number of maximal elements in $\Pi_{n,k}$

For a fixed k , we now find the exponential generating function of $M_{n,k}$. We mentioned that $M_{n,0} = 1$ for all $n \geq 1$. Also, since $\Pi_{1,k}$ is a one element set, $M_{1,k} = 1$ for all k . We need to prove two lemmas in order to prove the following result.

Theorem 1. *For a given k , the exponential generating function $M_k(x)$ is given by*

$$M_k(x) = \sum_{n \geq 1} M_{n,k} \frac{x^n}{n!} = \frac{e^x - 1}{(1+k) - ke^x}. \quad (1)$$

Example 1. We make a table of certain values of $M_{n,k}$.

k	$M_{1,k}$	$M_{2,k}$	$M_{3,k}$	$M_{4,k}$	$M_{5,k}$	$M_{6,k}$
0	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	3	13	75	541	
2	1	5	37	365		
3	1	7	73			
4	1	9	121			
5	1	11	181			

Since $M_{n,0} = 1$ for all $n \geq 1$, it is clear that $M_0(x) = e^x - 1$. For $k = 1, 2$, the equations $M_k(x)$ are

$$M_1(x) = x + \frac{3}{2!}x^2 + \frac{13}{3!}x^3 + \frac{75}{4!}x^4 + \frac{541}{5!}x^5 + \cdots = \frac{e^x - 1}{2 - e^x},$$

$$M_2(x) = x + \frac{5}{2!}x^2 + \frac{37}{3!}x^3 + \frac{365}{4!}x^4 + \cdots = \frac{e^x - 1}{3 - 2e^x}.$$

For $k \geq 1$, define a k -composition of length s to be a sequence of nonnegative integers (c_1, c_2, \dots, c_s) , whose sum is n , with the property that $c_1, c_s > 0$ and there are no

more than $k - 1$ consecutive zeroes. Note that a 1-composition is a composition in the usual sense. Let the symmetric group \mathfrak{S}_n act on the maximal elements by permuting the coordinates the usual way. The \mathfrak{S}_n -orbit of a maximal element X is the set $\{\sigma X: \sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_n\}$. We can now prove the lemmas that we will need to prove Theorem 1.

Lemma 1. *For $k \geq 1$, there exists a bijection between the \mathfrak{S}_n -orbits of maximal elements of $\Pi_{n,k}$ and the k -compositions of n .*

Proof. Given a maximal element X , and some $x \in X$, we define an equivalence relation on the coordinates, saying $x_i \sim x_j$ if and only if $X \subseteq H_{i,j,0}$. Let $[x_i]$ be the equivalence class of coordinates of x that contains x_i , and define a total ordering on the classes as follows: $[x_i] < [x_j]$ if $x_j = x_i + r$ for some $r > 0$. Then we can say that $x_i \leq x_j$ if $[x_i] \leq [x_j]$. There always exists a permutation $\tau \in \mathfrak{S}_n$ such that $x_{\tau(1)} \leq x_{\tau(2)} \leq \dots \leq x_{\tau(n)}$ for all $x \in X$, so we may assume that $x_1 \leq x_2 \leq \dots \leq x_n$. In each orbit, there is a unique X with this property. To find the corresponding k -composition of n , for $i = 1, \dots, s = x_n - x_1 + 1$, let c_i be the number of coordinates x_j such that $x_j - x_1 = i - 1$, including x_1 for $i = 1$, so if $x_1 = x_2 = \dots = x_n$, then $c_1 = n$ and $s = 1$. We need to show that the result is a k -composition, that there are no more than $k - 1$ consecutive zeroes. Suppose there are k consecutive zeroes, that $c_i > 0$ and $c_{i+1} = c_{i+2} = \dots = c_{i+k} = 0$. Then let $j = c_1 + \dots + c_i$, and let l be the smallest positive integer such that $c_{i+k+l} > 0$. Then $x_{j+1} - x_j = k + l > k$, which is not allowed. Since $\dim(X) = 1$, $x_{j+1} - x_j \leq k$ for all j . Therefore, this map is well-defined. It is one-to-one because any two maximal elements that correspond to the same k -composition are in the same \mathfrak{S}_n -orbit.

To prove that it is onto, let (c_1, c_2, \dots, c_s) be a k -composition of n . Then this corresponds to the orbit that has X such that $x_1 \leq x_2 \leq \dots \leq x_n$ for any $x \in X$ and has $x_j - x_1$ equal to one less than the smallest i such that $c_1 + \dots + c_i \geq j$. All we need to show now is that this X is in $\Pi_{n,k}$. It is enough to show that for any j , $x_{j+1} - x_j \leq k$. If $c_i > 0$ for some i , then the smallest i' such that $c_1 + \dots + c_{i'} \geq j + 1$ cannot be greater than $i + k$ because no more than $k - 1$ consecutive zeroes are allowed. Thus $x_j - x_1 = i' - i \leq k$ and we have a bijection. \square

Lemma 2. $M_{n,k} = 1 + k \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \binom{n}{i} M_{i,k}$ for $n \geq 2$ and for all k .

Proof. Clearly, $M_{n,0} = 1$ for all n . If $k \geq 1$, then for $n \geq 2$, a given k -composition (c_1, \dots, c_s) of n , by Lemma 1, corresponds to an orbit of maximal elements. The number of maximal elements in the orbit is $\binom{n}{c_1, \dots, c_s} = \binom{n}{c_1} \binom{n-c_1}{c_2, \dots, c_s}$. We know that $1 \leq c_1 \leq n$. If $c_1 = n$, then this corresponds to one maximal element, the one with all coordinates equal. Otherwise, there are $\binom{n}{c_1}$ choices of coordinates that are minimal. After c_1 , there can be between 0 and $k - 1$ zeroes, k possibilities, and then what is left from the next nonzero part and on is a k -composition of $n - c_1$. Thus we sum over all k -compositions

of n where $c_1 < n$. For $c_1 = n$, we add 1:

$$\begin{aligned} M_{n,k} &= 1 + \sum_{\substack{c_1 + \dots + c_s = n \\ 1 \leq c_1 \leq n-1}} \binom{n}{c_1} \binom{n-c_1}{c_2, \dots, c_s} \\ &= 1 + \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \binom{n}{i} k \sum_{\substack{c_1 + \dots + c_s = n-i \\ c_1, c_s > 0}} \binom{n-i}{c_1, \dots, c_s} \\ &= 1 + k \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \binom{n}{n-i} M_{n-i,k}. \end{aligned}$$

We change $n-i$ to i at the last step, and this proves the lemma. \square

Now that we have a recurrence for $M_{n,k}$ in terms of n , we can use it to prove the first theorem.

Proof of Theorem 1. For a given k ,

$$\begin{aligned} M_k(x) &= \sum_{n \geq 1} M_{n,k} \frac{x^n}{n!} = \sum_{n \geq 1} \frac{x^n}{n!} + k \sum_{n \geq 2} \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \binom{n}{i} M_{i,k} \frac{x^n}{n!} \quad (\text{Lemma 2}) \\ &= e^x - 1 + k \sum_{n \geq 2} \sum_{\substack{a+b=n \\ a,b > 0}} \left(M_{a,k} \frac{x^a}{a!} \right) \left(\frac{x^b}{b!} \right) \\ &= e^x - 1 + k M_k(x) (e^x - 1) \quad (\text{since } a, b \geq 1) \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, solving for $M_k(x)$, we get (1). \square

There is also a recurrence on this generating function in terms of k . The following corollary can easily be verified using (1). It will be revisited and discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Corollary 1. $M_{k+1}(x) = -1 + [1/(1 - M_k(x))]$.

Now that we have the function $M_k(x)$, we show that the exponential generating function of the cardinality of $\Pi_{n,k}$ is an immediate result, once we define some terms, and that the exponential generating function of the number of elements of $\Pi_{n,k}$ that have a given dimension also follows.

3. The cardinality of $\Pi_{n,k}$

Let $B_k(n) = \# \Pi_{n,k}$ and let $S_k(n, d)$ be the number of elements in $\Pi_{n,k}$ of dimension d . So $S_k(n, 0) = 0$ for all $n > 0$, and by convention, $S_k(0, 0) = 1$ and $B_k(0) = 1$. The

numbers $S_0(n, d)$ are known as the *Stirling numbers of the second kind*, and the numbers $B_0(n)$ are known as the *Bell numbers*. In this section, we find the exponential generating function in two variables denoted $N_k(x, t)$, such that $S_k(n, d)$ is the coefficient of $t^d x^n / n!$ for a fixed k . We show that it is the following.

Theorem 2. Given k , the exponential generating function $N_k(x, t)$ is

$$\sum_{n \geq 0} \sum_{d=0}^n S_k(n, d) t^d \frac{x^n}{n!} = \exp\left(t \frac{e^x - 1}{(1+k) - ke^x}\right). \quad (2)$$

Example 2. Assume that each element has weight 1, so that we find the exponential generating function of $B_k(n)$, which we simply denote $N_k(x)$, given k . Again, we make a table of certain values of $B_k(n)$, just as we did for $M_{n,k}$.

k	$B_k(1)$	$B_k(2)$	$B_k(3)$	$B_k(4)$	$B_k(5)$	$B_k(6)$
0	1	2	5	15	52	203
1	1	4	23	173	1602	
2	1	6	53	619		
3	1	8	95			
4	1	10	149			
5	1	12	215			

Since $\Pi_{n,0}$ is isomorphic to Π_n , its exponential generating function is $N_0(x) = e^{e^x - 1}$, which we will show in Example 3. For $k=1, 2$, the equations $N_k(x)$ are

$$N_1(x) = x + \frac{4}{2!}x^2 + \frac{23}{3!}x^3 + \frac{173}{4!}x^4 + \frac{1602}{5!}x^5 + \cdots = \exp\left(\frac{e^x - 1}{2 - e^x}\right),$$

$$N_2(x) = x + \frac{6}{2!}x^2 + \frac{53}{3!}x^3 + \frac{619}{4!}x^4 + \cdots = \exp\left(\frac{e^x - 1}{3 - 2e^x}\right).$$

First, we state an important definition. A *species* α is a map that assigns to every finite set S another finite set $\alpha(S)$ such that

1. If S and T are distinct finite sets, then $\alpha(S) \cap \alpha(T) = \emptyset$.
2. If w_α is a weight function that assigns a formal power series to each $A \in \alpha(S)$, then

$$\sum_{A \in \alpha(S)} w_\alpha(A) \text{ is a formal power series that depends only on } \#S.$$

The image $\alpha(S)$ is called the set of all *structures* (or α *structures*) with label set S .

The exponential generating function of α , denoted $\Gamma(\alpha)$, is given by

$$\Gamma(\alpha)(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n \frac{x^n}{n!},$$

where $a_n = \sum_{A \in \alpha([n])} w_\alpha(A)$. If we assume that the weight is always 1, then $a_n = \#\alpha([n])$. In general, species are used to find an exponential generating function using another one that is already known. Here are some operations.

- $(\alpha + \beta)(S) = \alpha(S) \uplus \beta(S)$ for species α and β , where \uplus indicates that it is a disjoint union.
- $\alpha^d(S)$ is the set of ways to partition S into exactly d nonempty ordered blocks and put an α structure on each block.
- $\alpha^{(d)}(S)$ is the set of ways to partition S into exactly d nonempty unordered blocks and put an α structure on each block.
- $e^\alpha = \sum_{d \geq 0} \alpha^{(d)}$.
- $\alpha^* = \sum_{d \geq 0} \alpha^d$.

As we will see, the question we are concerned with in this section uses an e^α structure. It can be verified that $\Gamma(\alpha + \beta) = \Gamma(\alpha) + \Gamma(\beta)$. In all other operations, we must have $\alpha(\emptyset) = \emptyset$, so that each block of the partition of the set is nonempty. Then $\Gamma(\alpha^d) = \Gamma(\alpha)^d$, and then it follows that $\Gamma(\alpha^{(d)}) = \frac{1}{d!} \Gamma(\alpha)^d$ and

$$\Gamma(e^\alpha) = e^{\Gamma(\alpha)}.$$

The subject of species is discussed in more detail in [5].

Example 3. Let α be the species such that $\alpha(\emptyset) = \emptyset$ and $\alpha(S) = \{S\}$ otherwise. Then $a_n = 1$ for all $n \geq 1$ and $a_0 = 0$, so $\Gamma(\alpha) = e^x - 1$. We can partition $[n]$ into any number of nonempty unordered blocks, and then put this α structure on each block, so that we have an e^α structure. Then $e^\alpha([n])$ is the partition lattice Π_n . If $B(n) = \#\Pi_n$, then

$$\sum_{n \geq 0} B(n) \frac{x^n}{n!} = \Gamma(e^\alpha) = e^{e^x - 1}. \quad (3)$$

If we want to know the number of partitions of $[n]$ into d blocks, denoted $S(n, d)$, then if we are given $\pi \in \Pi_n$, we let $w_\alpha(\pi) = t^{d(\pi)}$, where $d(\pi)$ is the number of blocks of π . Then let α be the species such that $a_n = t$ for $n \geq 1$, so each set $[n]$ has weight t . Then $\Gamma(\alpha) = t(e^x - 1)$ and the exponential generating function is

$$\sum_{n \geq 0} \sum_{d=0}^n S(n, d) \frac{x^n}{n!} t^d = e^{t(e^x - 1)}.$$

Both this and (3) are well-known results [3, Chapter 5].

This example proves the formula for $N_0(x, t)$. For $X \in \Pi_{n,k}$, define its corresponding partition $\pi(X)$ of $[n]$ as follows: i and j are in the same block of $\pi(X)$ if $X \subseteq H_{i,j,r}$ for $|r| \leq k$. Note that the converse of this is not necessarily true. We can now use what we have defined to prove the main result.

Proof of Theorem 2. Let α_k be the species such that $\alpha_k([n]) = \text{Max}(\Pi_{n,k})$ and $w_{\alpha_k}(X) = t$ for all $X \in \alpha_k([n])$. Then $a_n = M_{n,k}t$ for $n \geq 1$, and using Theorem 1,

$$\Gamma(\alpha_k) = t \left(\frac{e^x - 1}{1 + k - ke^x} \right).$$

Suppose $X \in \Pi_{n,k}$. If a given block of $\pi(X)$ has s elements in it, then it can correspond to a maximal element of $\Pi_{s,k}$. So here, we partition $[n]$ into nonempty unordered blocks and put an α_k structure on each block, and then $w_{\alpha_k}(X) = t^{\dim(X)}$, where $\dim(X)$ is the number of blocks in $\pi(X)$ and the dimension of X . Thus $N_k(x, t) = e^{\Gamma(\alpha_k)}$, and this proves the theorem. \square

This proves that the number of elements of $\Pi_{n,k}$ that have dimension d is the coefficient of $t^d x^n / n!$ in Eq. (2). We also have the following corollary.

Corollary 2. *The exponential generating function of the number of elements in $\Pi_{n,k}$ with dimension d is*

$$\sum_{n \geq d} S_k(n, d) \frac{x^n}{n!} = \frac{1}{d!} \left(\frac{e^x - 1}{1 + k - ke^x} \right)^d.$$

Proof. If we reverse the order of summation on the left hand side of (2), we get

$$\sum_{d \geq 0} t^d \sum_{n \geq d} S_k(n, d) \frac{x^n}{n!} = e^{tM_k(x)} = \sum_{d \geq 0} t^d \frac{1}{d!} (M_k(x))^d.$$

Then we extract the coefficient of t^d to get the result. \square

4. The recurrence on $M_k(x)$

We now prove a combinatorial result on the set of maximal elements of $\Pi_{n,k}$. We look further at Corollary 1, which gives a recurrence on the function $M_k(x)$. Given a species α , recall α^* from the list of operations in Section 3. It can be verified that if $\alpha(\emptyset) = \emptyset$, then

$$\Gamma(\alpha^*) = \frac{1}{1 - \Gamma(\alpha)}.$$

Another way of defining $\alpha^*(S)$ is as the set of ways to partition S into nonempty blocks, put an α structure on each block, and then permute the blocks of the partition.

As before, $\alpha_k([n]) = \text{Max}(\Pi_{n,k})$. Then $\alpha_k^*([n])$ is the set of ordered pairs consisting of an element $Y \in \Pi_{n,k}$ and a permutation of the blocks of $\pi(Y)$, the partition that corresponds to Y as described in the paragraph just before the proof of Theorem 2. According to Corollary 1, for $n \geq 1$, the coefficient of x^n in $M_{k+1}(x)$ is the same as

that coefficient in $1/(1 - M_k(x)) = \Gamma(\alpha_k^*)$. This means the following theorem, which we now prove combinatorially.

Theorem 3. *There is a bijection between the set $\alpha_k^*([n])$ and the set of maximal elements of $\Pi_{n,k+1}$.*

Proof. Given $X \in \text{Max}(\Pi_{n,k+1})$, we find the element Y of $\Pi_{n,k}$ that corresponds to X and a permutation of the blocks of $\pi(Y)$. There exists a $\sigma \in \mathfrak{S}_n$ such that for all $x \in X$, if $i < j$ then $x_{\sigma(i)} \geq x_{\sigma(j)}$. Now let $s_i = \sigma(i)$ for all i and put $s_1 \in B_1$. Then for $i = 1, 2, \dots, n-1$, in that order, let a be such that $s_i \in B_a$. Then we know that $X \subseteq H_{s_i, s_{i+1}, r_i}$ for some r_i between 0 and $k+1$. If $r_i = k+1$, then we put $s_{i+1} \in B_{a+1}$. Otherwise, we put $s_{i+1} \in B_a$. Then Y is the intersection of all the H_{s_i, s_{i+1}, r_i} that contain X and have $r_i < k+1$, and the ordered partition is $B_1/B_2/\dots/B_t$ where t is such that $s_n \in B_t$.

Going the other way, suppose $\pi = B_1/B_2/\dots/B_t$ is an ordered partition of $[n]$ and Y is an element of $\Pi_{n,k}$ such that $\pi = \pi(Y)$. We want to find X , the maximal element of $\Pi_{n,k+1}$ that corresponds to this pair. First, $X \subseteq Y$ because we let the hyperplanes that contain Y also contain X . Now for each $a = 1, 2, \dots, t-1$, consider B_a and B_{a+1} . For $y \in Y$, find $i_a \in B_a$ and $j_a \in B_{a+1}$ such that for all other $b \in B_a$, $y_{i_a} \leq y_b$ and for all other $c \in B_{a+1}$, $y_{j_a} \geq y_c$. Then X is the intersection of Y and all $H_{i_a, j_a, k+1}$ for these i_a and j_a . Since the two maps described here are inverses of each other, we have a bijection. \square

Corollary 3. *There is a bijection between the maximal elements of $\Pi_{n,1}$ and the union of all surjective functions $\phi: [n] \rightarrow [r]$ for $r = 1, \dots, n$.*

Proof. This corresponds to the special case of Theorem 3 for $k=0$, so it is enough to show that there is a bijection between these surjective functions and the ordered partitions of $[n]$. This is true by [8, p. 34 (bottom)]. \square

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